

Executive Registry

3-1152

14 June 1952

Dr. Edward L. Bowles
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Dr. Bowles:

I have delayed answering your letter of 14 May as I had hoped to discuss it with Mr. Hedden but he has not yet returned from Europe. I will communicate with you in more detail later.

You know, of course, that I am fully alive to the fact that our scientific intelligence organization is less effective than I would desire. I agree with you inspirational direction, encouragement and support are needed and will welcome your suggestion as to how this might be provided. I am afraid I cannot find myself entirely in agreement with your conclusion that even were we able to find a strong leader he would either perceive the situation and decline the post or, if accepted, would soon find his task insufferably difficult and retire. My observation has been that "strong leaders" neither flinch from challenge nor quit because of difficulties. I know this sounds pedantic but I am forced to record my own opinion in view of what seems to me an over-gloomy assessment of the situation. You understand that I would not be quite so frank for other than a close personal friend.

If you will accept the premise that there is no lack of appreciation by the management above the OSI level as to the importance of scientific intelligence and its potentialities and that a very determined effort to strengthen this phase of our work is being made, you may not find it too difficult to answer the question put to you in an earlier paragraph.

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NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒☐ DECLASSIFIED

CLASS. OR DECLASS. DATE

NEXT REVIEW DATE

AUTH: [redacted]

DATE: 10 Apr 81

REVIEWER: [redacted]

Faithfully,

Walter B. Smith
Walter B. Smith *by DR*

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EDWARD L. BOWLES

14 May 1952

General W. B. Smith, Director
Central Intelligence Agency
2430 E. Street, N. W.
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear General Smith:

Thank you very much for your recent reply to my letter of 1 April. I appreciate and understand the reasons for your point of view. Rest assured that if I can be of any assistance to you in the future I would feel it a privilege to help.

In the light of your reply to my original letter I have reviewed what I had to say in it. I have come to the conclusion that perhaps I was not so outspoken as I should have been. I have always had such a tremendous regard for your ability, and, in fact, an affection for you, that I can not restrain myself from following up this letter with a more explicit statement of my views. I could not forgive myself if sometime later you were to find yourself in difficulty because of something I had not brought to your attention.

I do not believe that you are so organized at present that you can make the most of what our scientific resources can contribute toward the national security through the medium of your organization.

Even in the cursory examination I was able to make in the immediate neighborhood of Cambridge, which is fertile in scientific talent, I determined that there is a strong feeling of frustration among those who by association with CIA are trying to help OSI. They feel the lack of imaginative and determined leadership of OSI.

Perhaps even more insidious is the inference that the very existence of this condition implies a lack of appreciation by the management immediately above OSI level as to the potentialities of an understanding, concerted effort in the field of scientific intelligence. If this inference is true, even were you able to find a strong leader he would either perceive the situation and decline the post, or, if he accepted, would soon find his task insufferably difficult and retire.

The present head of OSI is a sincere person who is bound to do a good, average, plodding job. He is a man who needs inspirational direction, encouragement and support. In the present climate this he can not get. I sincerely doubt that you are thus able to make the best of even the current situation.

The conspicuous success of the Radiation Laboratory outlet of the OSRD during the war came about because, in the administration of this

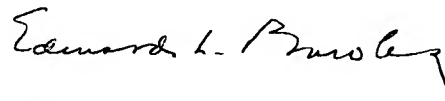
- 2 -

brilliant aggregation of men, they themselves felt they were being led by their peers. It was considered a privilege to become a part of the group. True, they were operating with the impetus that comes from an emergency status. I believe, however, that with the right leadership the same caliber of men can be drawn to your operation in adequate quantity even today, were they sure they could operate with productive efficiency. With proper organization I see no reason why they could not.

I must confess to a personal bias, that no effort at this time could be more important to the over-all effectiveness of CIA than that which deals comprehensively with scientific and technological intelligence. I do not know any area where it would be more profitable to our security to apply the best scientific brains in the country. The realistic way in which to achieve this end is to acquire for yourself a deputy who is trained in these disciplines and who thoroughly understands their potentialities, and who knows the manner in which to apply them to intelligence problems. I know less than a handful of men who could possibly qualify for such a post.

These judgments are made boldly without the benefit of the full consideration I should have liked to give to this vital problem by which to confirm them, yet I think it would be unfair not to alert you to a situation from which you may, by your organizational complexities, have been insulated or protected. From the standpoint of our national security I believe I am pointing to a situation which is acute.

Cordially, and with warm regards,



Edward L. Bowles

MIT, Cambridge
Massachusetts